

In the Claims:

Cancel claims 90-92, 94, 96, 104, 107-109, 111, 113 and 116-121 without estoppel or disclaimer of the subject matter thereof, and amend claims 84, 93, 95, 99, 103, 110 and 112, as follows:

1-83. (Canceled).

84. (Currently Amended) A tissue dissector, comprising:

an elongated tubular body having a central axis extending between a proximal end and a distal end and enclosing an endoscopic imaging element; and  
a dissecting, viewing and dilating unit removably mounted on the distal end of the tubular body, including:

a transparent distal tip having substantially conical tapered outer walls converging substantially symmetrically about the central axis to a blunt end for dissecting tissue, the tip being disposed on a distal end of the unit to dissect tissue and facilitate passage of the tubular body through tissue under endoscopic visualization; and

a non-inflatable dilating element disposed proximally of the distal tip and having a substantially olive-shaped exterior contour that is disposed symmetrically about the central axis and that gradually increases in size in the proximal direction from a distal edge thereof to a maximum cross-sectional dimension greater than the cross-sectional dimension of the distal end of the

tubular body, the dilating element then decreasing in size to a proximal edge for facilitating atraumatic expansion of tissue following dissection by the tapered distal tip.

85. (Canceled).

86. (Withdrawn) The tissue dissector of claim 84, further including at least one resilient member positioned on an outer surface of the tubular body near the distal end thereof, and wherein the dilating unit further comprises a mating recess for engaging the resilient member and mounting the dilating unit on the distal end of the tubular body in a snap-fit engagement.

87. (Withdrawn) The tissue dissector of claim 84, further including a lever-actuated locking device formed on the tubular body and the dilating element including a mating pin and recess for mounting the dilating element on the distal end of the tubular body and enable easy removal.

88-92. (Canceled).

93. (Currently Amended). The tissue dissector of claim 84, wherein the maximum cross-sectional dimension of the dilating element is symmetrically disposed about the central axis and is at least two times larger than the cross-section sectional dimension of the distal end of the tubular body.

94. (Canceled).

95. (Currently Amended) The tissue dissector of claim 84, wherein the dilating element is compressible in cross-sectional dimension.

96-98. (Canceled).

99. (Currently Amended) A tissue dissector, comprising:  
an elongated tubular body having a central axis extending between proximal end and a distal end and enclosing an endoscopic imaging element;  
a transparent distal tip having tapered outer walls converging substantially symmetrically about the central axis to a blunt end for dissecting tissue, the tip being disposed on the distal end of the tubular body to dissect tissue and facilitate passage of the tubular body through tissue under endoscopic visualization; and

a non-inflatable dilating element having substantially ovoidal exterior shape that is substantially symmetrically disposed about the central axis and that is removably mounted on the tubular body proximal to the distal tip and having an exterior contour that gradually increases in size in the proximal direction from a distal edge thereof until a maximum cross-sectional dimension greater than the cross-sectional dimension of the distal end of the tubular body, the dilating element then gradually decreasing in size to a proximal edge for facilitating atraumatic expansion of tissue following dissection by the tapered distal tip.

100. (Canceled)

101. (Withdrawn) The tissue dissector of claim 99, further including at least one resilient member positioned on an outer surface of the tubular body near the distal end thereof, and wherein the dilating element further comprises a mating recess for engaging the resilient member and removably positioning the dilating element on the tubular body in a snap-fit engagement.

102. (Withdrawn) The tissue dissector of claim 99, further including a lever-actuated locking device formed on the tubular body and the dilating unit including a mating pin and recess for mounting the dilating unit on the distal end of the tubular body and enable easy removal.

103. (Currently Amended) The tissue dissector of claim 99, wherein the distal tip and dilating element are formed as a single unit removably mounted on the tubular body substantially symmetrically about the central axis.

104-109. (Canceled).

110. (Currently Amended) The tissue dissector of claim 99, wherein the maximum cross-sectional dimension of the dilating element is symmetrically disposed about the central axis and is at least two times larger than the cross-section sectional dimension of the distal end of the tubular body.

111. (Canceled).

112. (Currently Amended) The tissue dissector of claim 99, wherein the dilating element is compressible in cross-sectional dimension.

113-121. (Canceled).

122. (New) A tissue dissector according to claim 84 in which a distal end of the endoscopic imaging element is disposed near the transparent distal tip to provide endoscopic visualization therethrough.

123. (New) The tissue dissector of claim 95 in which the dilating element is resiliently compressible in cross-sectional dimension.

124. (New) A tissue dissector according to claim 99 in which a distal end of the endoscopic imaging element is disposed near the transparent distal tip to provide endoscopic visualization therethrough.

125. (New) The tissue dissector of claim 84 in which a spacer length is disposed intermediate the tip and the dilating element, the spacer length having an outer dimension less than the outer dimension of the dilating element and positioning the dilating element within an angle of the tapered outer walls of the tip to permit contact of the outer walls of the tip with a target vessel.